

HIV Vaccine Awareness Day – May 18th. Real People. Real Progress.

FACT SHEET

**HIV Vaccine Awareness Day
May 18, 2004
HIV Vaccine Research: Real People. Real Progress.**

HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC IN THE UNITED STATES

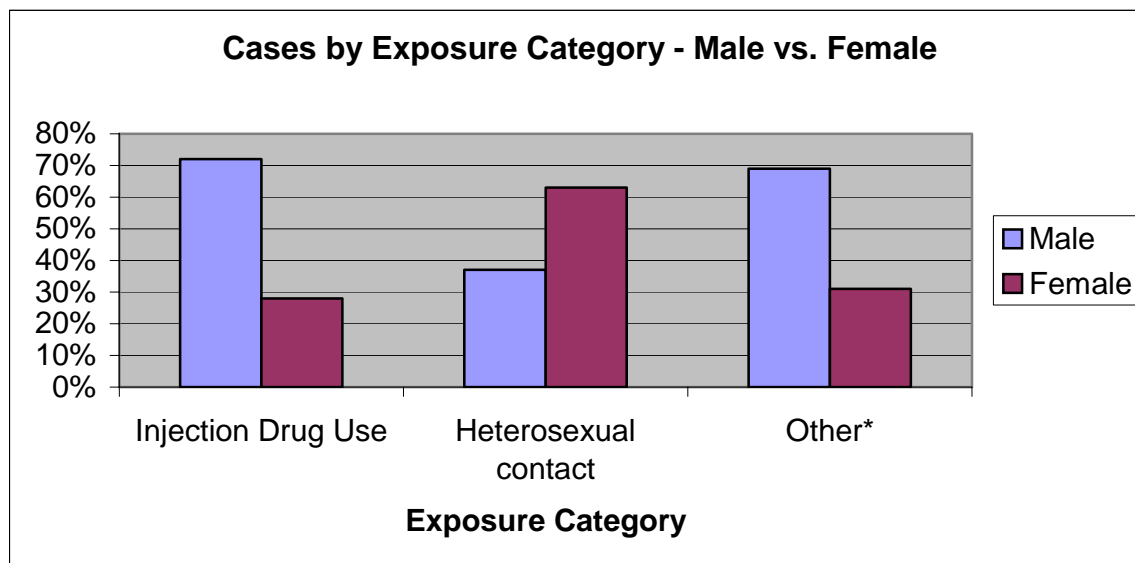
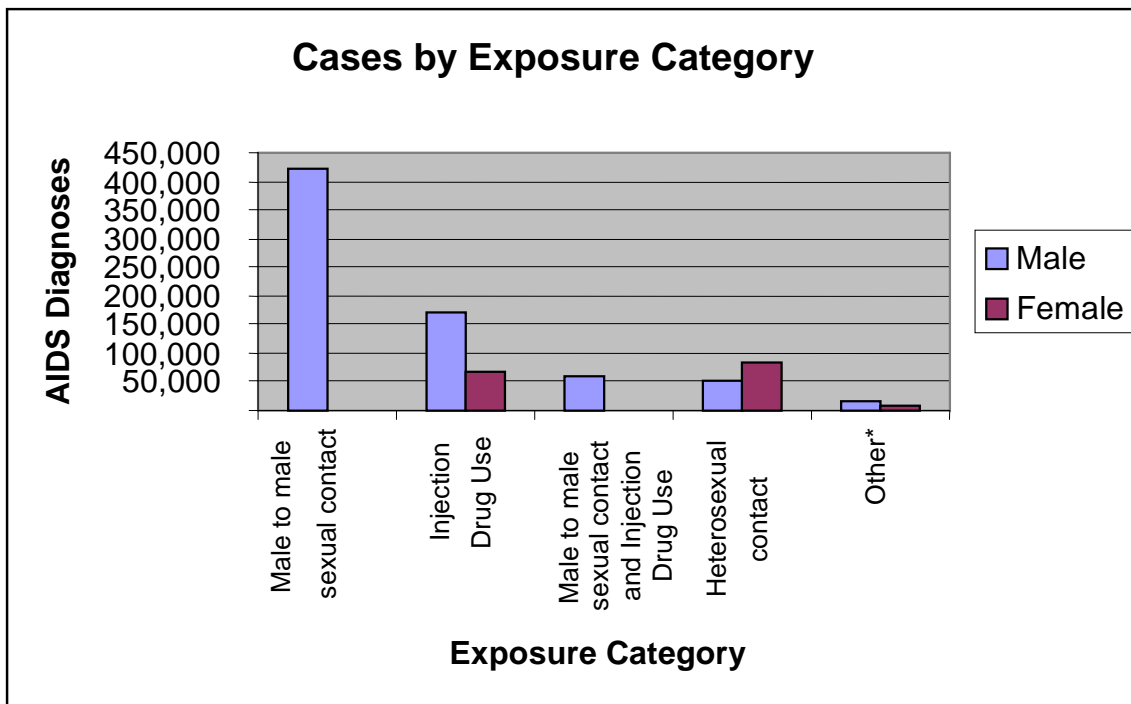
The first cases of what would later become known as AIDS were reported in the U.S. in June of 1981. Over half a million Americans have died of AIDS since the epidemic began.

The statistics are staggering:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that as many as 950,000 Americans are living with HIV, and more than one-third of them do not know it.
- Each year, over 40,000 people in the U.S. become infected with HIV, a rate that has remained virtually unchanged in recent years. Seventy percent are men and thirty percent are women. Of these, half are younger than 25 years of age.
- Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) account for the largest number of people reported with AIDS each year, nearly half of all AIDS cases. Already over 250,000 MSM in the U.S. have already died from this disease.
- Communities of color are disproportionately affected by the epidemic, representing both the majority of new AIDS cases and of Americans living with AIDS in the U.S.:
 - ❖ More than half of all new HIV infections occur in African Americans, who make up 12 percent of the U.S. population. AIDS is the fifth leading cause of death of African Americans ages 25-44, and is the number one cause of death in African American men of all ages.
 - ❖ Nineteen percent of new HIV infections occur in Latinos, who make up 13 percent of the U.S. population. AIDS is the third leading cause of death among Latinos ages 35-44.



Data are summarized from the CDC annual *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*. Unless otherwise noted, numbers are estimated numbers of diagnoses of AIDS in the United States through December 2002.



* Includes hemophilia, blood transfusion, perinatal and risk not reported or not identified.

HIV/AIDS IN THE WORLD

According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, HIV/AIDS is a worldwide pandemic:

- Today, approximately 40 million people are estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS. Of these, 37 million are adults and 2.5 million are children under the age of 15.
- An estimated 5 million people acquired the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in 2003, including 4.2 million adults and 700,000 children under the age of 15.

- During 2003, AIDS caused the deaths of an estimated 3 million people, including 2.5 million adults and 500,000 children under the age of 15.

WHAT IS AN HIV VACCINE?

A preventive HIV vaccine is a substance that teaches the body's immune system to recognize and protect itself against HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. HIV vaccines currently being tested in humans are made from man-made materials that cannot cause HIV infection.

The long-term goal is to develop a vaccine that is 100 percent effective and protects everyone from infection. However, even if a vaccine only protects some people, it could still have a major impact on controlling the epidemic.

There are numerous safe and effective vaccines used to prevent various diseases. Vaccines have been used successfully against many life-threatening diseases, including smallpox, measles and polio.

May 18th is HIV Vaccine Awareness Day. It is a day to educate Americans about the need for a vaccine to prevent HIV. This year's theme is "Real People. Real Progress." We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of thousands of study volunteers, scientists and health professionals committed to finding a safe and effective vaccine. With the help of these people behind the science, much progress has been made toward developing a safe and effective preventive HIV vaccine. Currently, there are over 20 promising HIV vaccine candidates in various stages of testing. Yet, there is still no vaccine. We are all in this together. All Americans, especially at-risk populations such as communities of color and those who are sexually active, need to learn more about HIV vaccine research and be a part of making an HIV vaccine a reality.

HIV Vaccine Awareness Day is commemorated with an upside-down AIDS Ribbon. The upside-down red AIDS ribbon brings attention to HIV Vaccine Awareness Day and gives individuals a unique way to show their personal awareness about HIV vaccine research. The upside-down red AIDS ribbon forms a "V," for "vaccines," the vision of a world without AIDS and symbolizes the urgent need to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. By encouraging people to wear their red AIDS ribbon upside down on May 18, we are recognizing the value of HIV vaccine research, the commitment to find vaccines that work and the advances that are being made.

Goals of HIV Vaccine Awareness Day

- Generate widespread observance of HIV Vaccine Awareness Day to raise awareness, understanding and support of HIV vaccine research, especially among target audiences.
- Recognize and support volunteers, researchers and others, who support this effort.

Key Messages

- The AIDS crisis is not over; HIV preventive vaccines are the best hope to stop the global pandemic.
- Currently, there is no HIV vaccine available.
- You can help by becoming educated about HIV vaccines and helping educate others.
- HIV Vaccine Awareness Day is an opportunity to thank the thousands of volunteers and researchers who contribute to the progress being made in finding an HIV vaccine every day.

Community Participation is Essential

By raising awareness and encouraging study participation, individuals and communities can contribute to the successful development of HIV vaccines. Although over twelve thousand people have already volunteered to take part in HIV vaccine studies, many more will be needed. A large HIV vaccine trial will require thousands more participants of all races/ethnicities, genders and socioeconomic backgrounds to ensure that the vaccine works in all populations.

Therefore, community support is essential in efforts to break down stigma and myths about HIV vaccine research. Developing an effective HIV vaccine depends upon individuals and communities informing, educating and supporting others.

What can you do?

- Wear your red AIDS ribbon upside down and explain why you are doing so when asked.
- Let others know you support HIV vaccine research.
- Educate others about the need for an HIV vaccine.
- Support vaccine trial volunteers and/or volunteer yourself.

For more information on HIV Vaccine Awareness Day or HIV vaccine research visit www.aidsinfo.nih.gov, www.vrc.nih.gov or www.hvtn.org or call 800-HIV-0440 for a free brochure (available in English and Spanish).

NIAID-Funded Vaccine Clinical Trials

Between 1987 and 2003:

- There have been 38 preventive HIV vaccine candidates studied in the United States and over 60 worldwide.
- More than 20 HIV vaccines are in various stages of testing.
- More vaccines will be tested in the next two years than in the last five years combined.

HIV Vaccine Trial Units in the United States

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| • Baltimore, MD | • New York City, NY | • Seattle, WA |
| • Birmingham, AL | • Providence, RI | • St. Louis, MO |
| • Boston, MA | • Rochester, NY | |
| • Nashville, TN | • San Francisco, CA | |

NIAID is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). NIAID supports basic and applied research to prevent, diagnose and treat infectious and immune-mediated illnesses, including HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, illness from potential agents of bioterrorism, tuberculosis, malaria, autoimmune disorders, asthma and allergies.

Sources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Basic HIV/AIDS Statistics*, 2003.
- Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, *AIDS Epidemic Update*, 2003.
- Kaiser Family Foundation, *AIDS At 20: The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the United States*, 2001.
- NIAID/NIH/DHHS, *Clinical Research on HIV Vaccines*, 2003.